

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
POCATELLO FIELD OFFICE
Categorical Exclusion
Deep Creek Range Young Stand Forest Maintenance Project
DOI- BLM-ID-I020-2015-0041-CX

Purpose and Need for the Action

Twenty five acres was planted with Douglas fir and lodge pole pine trees, within the Deep Creek Mountain Range, following timber harvest activities in the late 1980's. The dense stands of mixed are the result of high percentage of the planted trees surviving, as well as natural regeneration from sub alpine firs, and a lack of management(pre commercial thinning) This is resulting in poor tree growth and vigor due to high competition for sunlight and nutrients. There are 5 units within this project. Unit 1 is 8 acres, unit 2 and 3 are 1 acre each, unit 4 is 11 acres and unit 5 is 3 acres. Trees per acre (TPA) numbers vary from unit to unit. Units 2 and 3 have approximately 600 trees per acre while the other three units range from 2200 to 2500 trees per acre. Management action(s) are needed to improve forest health and reduce the threat of wildfire in the BLM plantations in the Deep Creek Range. The purpose of these actions would be to:

- Ensure a healthy stand by removing young suppressed trees that are damaged by, or highly susceptible to, insects and disease, are wind thrown, or have broken tops.
- Increase the availability of water, nutrients, and light in those areas where forest stands have lost the ability to maintain vigor in order to move the stand of timber towards a sustainable healthy, diverse stand structure.
- Reduce hazardous fuel loading to prevent catastrophic wildfires and resultant resource damage, while providing conditions so wildfire can safely take its role again in the ecosystem.

Description of the Proposed Action

The BLM proposed to pre-commercially thin 25 acres in the Deep Creek Range. The plantations are located in T11S R32E Sec 14&22. The thinning would take place by hand. Biomass would be loped and scattered and left onsite. Treatments will include hand thinnings and lop and scattering within the units. Thinning specs are as follows:

Deep Creek Plantations				
Unit	Acreage	Estimated Trees/Acre	Cutting Specifications	Residual Trees/Acre
1	8	2200	16x16	170
2	1	600	20x20	109
3	1	600	20x20	109
4	11	2500	12x12	300

Deep Creek Plantations				
Unit	Acreage	Estimated Trees/Acre	Cutting Specifications	Residual Trees/Acre
5	3	2500	12x12	300

In units where the existing stand is denser (more TPA, units 1, 4, and 5) the thinning will not be as heavy. This is due to the existing average size of the trees within these stands. To heavy of thinning risks a heavy breakage due to the snow loads.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan: *Pocatello Resource Management Plan (April 2012)*

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, because it is consistent with the following LUP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions):

Goal FO-1. Use a variety of silvicultural techniques and harvest systems to provide for an ecologically healthy system while offering products and services.

Objective FO-1.1. Maintain a sustainable forest management program.

Action FO-1.1.4. Silvicultural prescriptions will provide for stand health through the management of insects and disease, animal damage, and vegetation competition to promote regeneration of tree growth.

Finding or Recommendation:

This Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9, Forestry (4), which applies to the pre-commercial and brush control using small mechanical devices.

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and, as documented below, none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2.3A apply.

/s/ Channing Swan 9/10/15

Preparer signature and date

/s/ David A Pacioretty 9/10/15

Authorized Officer Signature and Date

David A. Pacioretty

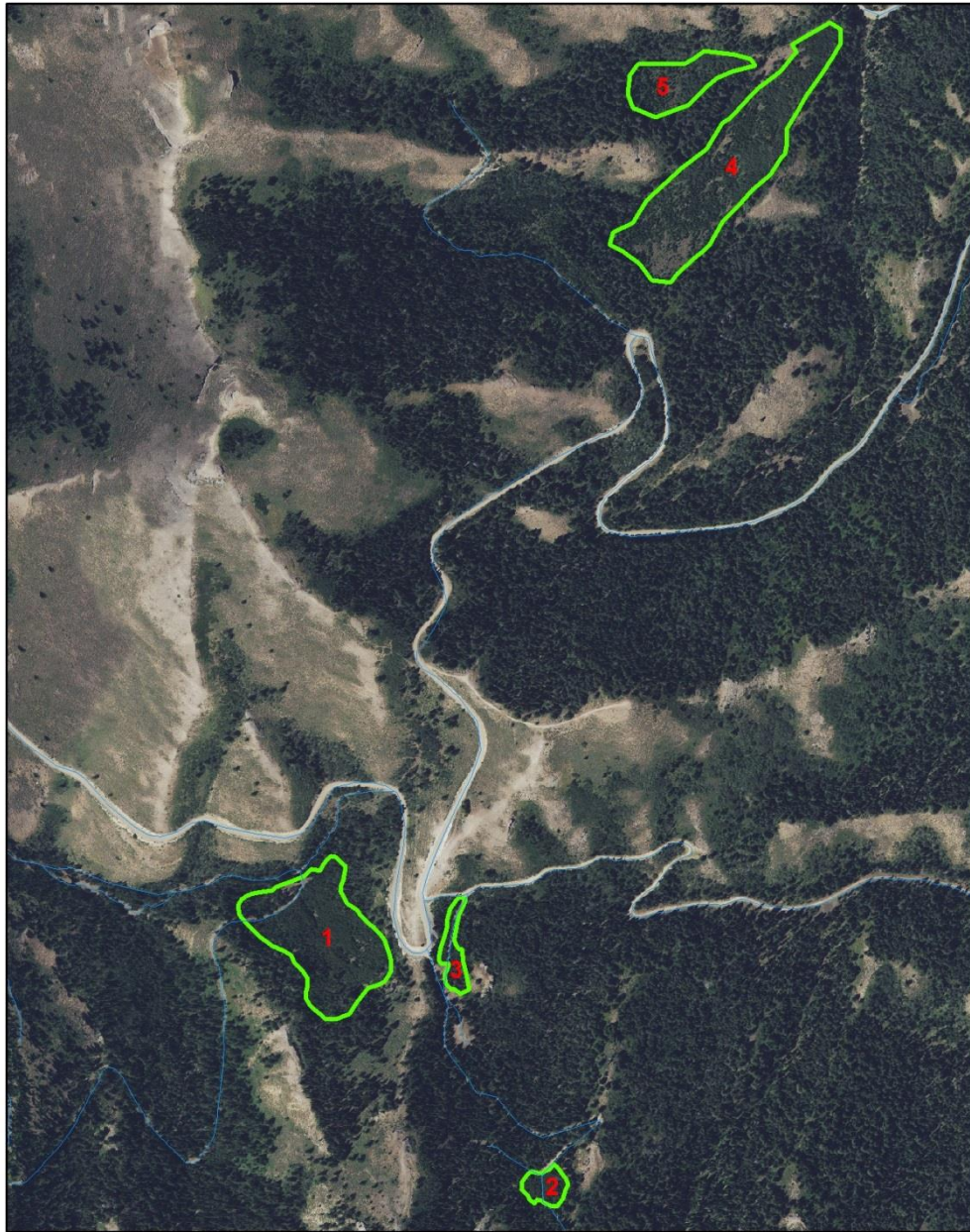
DM #	Extraordinary Circumstance	YES	NO
1	<p>Have significant impacts on public health or safety.</p> <p><i>There would be no new ground disturbing activities as a result of the action. The proposed action will take place on harvest units that were replanted in the late 1980's. Standard terms and conditions would continue to be implemented for the thinning project in the same manner as other authorized thinning projects. The proposed action will have no significant impacts on health or safety of the public.</i></p>		X
2	<p>Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.</p> <p><i>No wilderness, wilderness study areas and wild and scenic rivers are present near the project area. The proposal would not impede opportunities for recreation.</i></p> <p><i>This project is not located within an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) or Research Natural Area (RNA). No new disturbance would be authorized; as a result, no significant impacts to riparian-wetland areas would occur.</i></p> <p><i>No known historic or cultural resources are located within the project area. This action is exempted under the State Protocol agreement between BLM and Idaho State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO).</i></p>		X
3	<p>Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102(2)(E)].</p> <p><i>The proposed action will not have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. Pre-commercial thinning is a common and accepted silvicultural practice used to maintain the health of saplings. There would be no new ground disturbing activities as a result of the action. The proposed action will take place on harvest units that were replanted in the late 1980's, and no known highly controversial or potentially significant environmental effects have resulted and should not result from the issuing of a renewed ROW.</i></p>		X
4	<p>Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.</p> <p><i>Pre-commercial thinning projects have been around for decades and are an accepted and required step in the management of young planted stands. No heavy equipment or ground disturbing activities will occur.</i></p>		X

<u>DM #</u>	<u>Extraordinary Circumstance</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
5	<p>Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.</p> <p><i>The proposed action would not set a precedent. Pre-commercial thinning is a common silvicultural practice used to maintain health saplings and quicken the time the stand remains undersized. There would be no new ground disturbing activities as a result of the action. The proposed action would not establish a precedent for future actions. The proposed action will take place on harvest units that were replanted in the late 1980's. Standard terms and conditions would continue to be implemented for the thinning project in the same manner as other authorized thinning projects.</i></p>		X
6	<p>Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.</p> <p><i>The proposed action would not have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.</i></p>		X
7	<p>Have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.</p> <p><i>As there are no known historic properties listed or eligible for listing on the NRHP located in the project area, the proposed action would have no significant impacts.</i></p>		X
8	<p>Have significant impacts on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated critical habitat for these species.</p> <p><i>There are no T&E species or critical habitat present within the project area, no significant impacts to these species would be expected.</i></p>		X
9	<p>Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.</p> <p><i>The proposed action does not violate any federal law or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. No cumulatively significant effects anticipated.</i></p>		X
10	<p>Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).</p> <p><i>The stands to be treated are surrounded by BLM lands. There will be no impact to low income or minority populations with this project.</i></p>		X

<u>DM #</u>	<u>Extraordinary Circumstance</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
11	<p>Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).</p> <p><i>There are no sacred sites known to occur in the project area. Furthermore, the project will not limit access to Indian sacred sites on Federal lands or impact traditional resource use in the area.</i></p>		X
12	<p>Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).</p> <p><i>The proposed action will have no on the ground changes to the existing old planting unit locations. Designated routes will be used for access into the project units. No heavy equipment will be used for this project. Standard terms and conditions for weeds are included in the authorization. The proposed action will not contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species.</i></p>		X

Appendix A

Deep Creek Plantations



Legend

- Open Roads
- 0 0.05 0.1 0.2 Miles
- Deep Creek Plantations



Deep Creek Plantations Unit 1

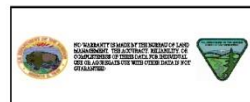


Legend

— Open Roads

Deep Creek Plantations

0 25 50 100 150 200 Feet



Deep Creek Plantations Unit 2



Legend

- Open Roads
- 0 25 50 100 Feet
- Deep Creek Plantations



Deep Creek Plantations Unit 3

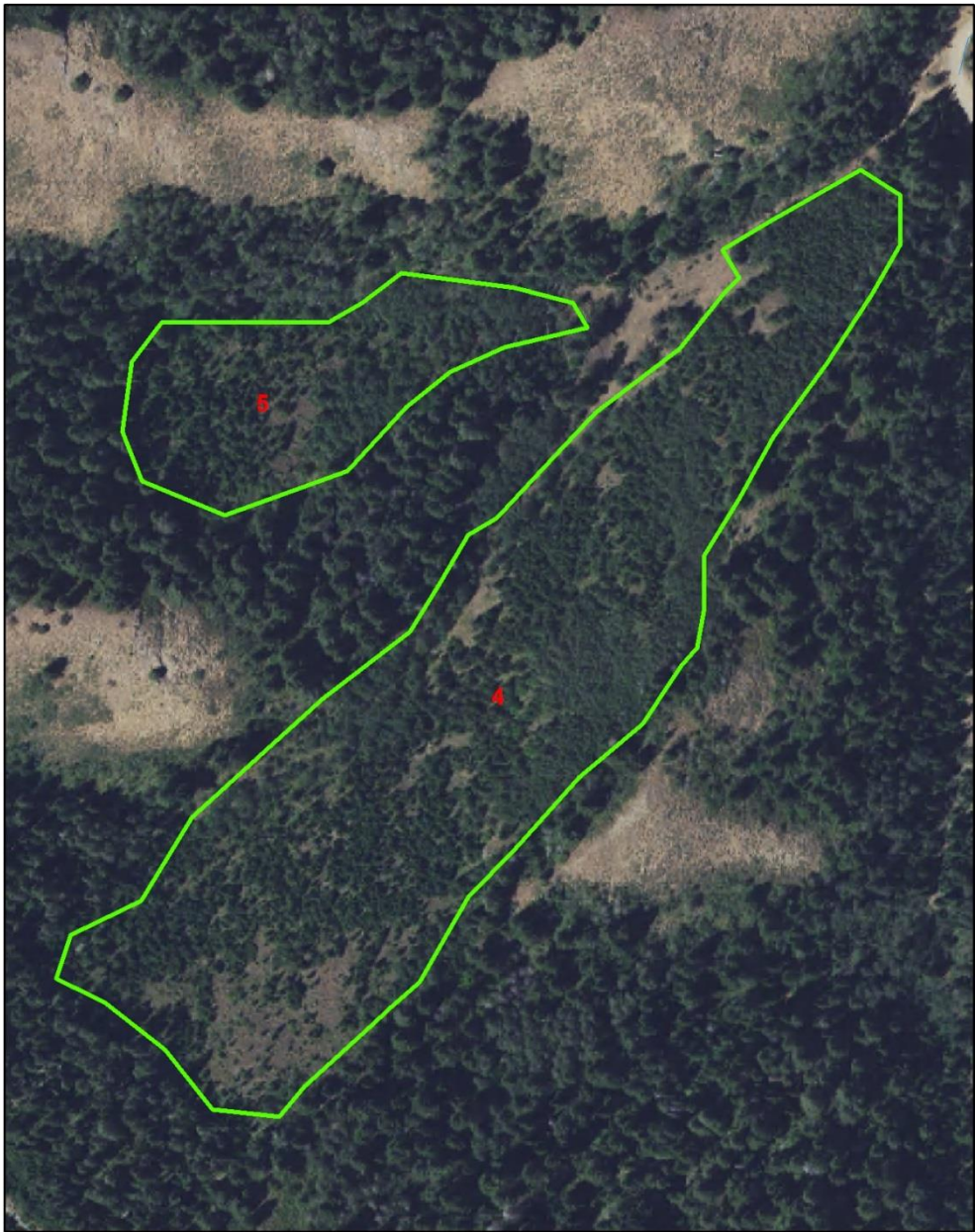


Legend

- Open Roads
- 0 25 50 100 Feet
- Deep Creek Plantations



Deep Creek Plantations Unit 4 & 5



Legend

- Open Roads
- Deep Creek Plantations

